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A study on primary school teachers' organizational commitment and psychological empowerment in the district of klang

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Abstract

Teacher's organizational commitment is important for school effectiveness and indirectly is able to affect the students' outcome. Previous studies demonstrated that empowered followers display better commitment to the organization. When employees are empowered, they show a better level of self-confidence and are able to influence work environment in a positive manner. However, due to internal and external pressure faced by the schools, to what extent psychological empowerment could enhance organizational commitment among school teachers? Therefore, this study intends to investigate the influence of teachers' psychological empowerment on their commitment. 258 daily primary school teachers in the district of Klang participated in this study. The findings revealed that there was a positive and moderate linear relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. Based on the findings, this study also provides recommendations for practices and future research.

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Keywords: Organizational commitment; psychological empowerment; self-determination; meaning; impact.

1. Background of the study

Primary education is the most important stage in the formal education of a child. Education at this level forms the core of the national education system and needs to be on track so that the goals for national development can be achieved at a level to be proud of (Mohd Johdi Salleh, 2007). The Ministry of Education Malaysia has outlined a number of objectives for primary education such as to facilitate the personal development of pupils, secondary school preparation, social skills and cultural understanding, religious and moral, and contribution to the society and country (MOE, 2012). The objectives of primary education are achievable with the sincere efforts and involvement from teachers. Effective teachers are always planning their activities in school. The implementation of duties with casualness, little interest and no serious effort would result in the school objectives not being met. Huberman (1993) in Zainudin, Junaidah and Nazmi (2010) pointed out that teachers' commitment is one of the most crucial factors in the success of future education. This is because teachers are directly involved within the educational process and they are responsible to equip their students with knowledge and good manners (Zainudin et al., 2010). At present,

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due to raising demands for teachers, the traditional familiar roles and everyday jobs of teachers have been redefined. Thus, teachers' commitment to the school must be an essential aspect to focus on to produce world class teaching and to maintain talented human capital (Teh, Wong & Ngerang, 2011). Previous study reveals that teacher's commitment is a key for the relationship between teachers and students and hence affects students' achievement (Hulpia, Devos, & Vankeer, 2011; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1985). Therefore teacher's organizational commitment is important for school effectiveness, which indirectly able affects the students' outcomes.

Meyer and Allen (1997) described organizational commitment as a psychological state that is concerned about how individuals feel about their organizational engagement and the desire to continue to remain with the organization. They stated that organizational commitment is a multi-dimensional construct with three components, namely affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to where employees feel emotionally attached to the values, objectives and goals of the organization. Employees who feel strong affective commitment will incorporate the goals of where they work and likely to remain in the organization because they want to (Meyer & Allen, 2004). They are more loyal and devoted to the respective organization. They are also ready to go for 'extra mile', which is unexpected for that organization. It is considered to be the best form of employees' commitment. Employees who perceived this type of commitment enjoys membership in organization (Teh, Wong & Ngerang, 2011). On the other hand, continuance commitment implies the commitment developed by employees' contribution to the organizations. The employees believe since they have worked so hard, they have to remain in that organization. They are more calculative workers. Besides, they have to consider the cost and the fewer options they have when they leave the organization. They stay because they have to. While normative commitment refers to employees' feeling of moral obligation to stay in the organization (Meyer and Allen, 2004).

According to Chan, Lau, Lim & Hogan (2008) positive outcomes of employees' organizational commitment include higher job satisfaction, lower turnover rate, minimized absenteeism, improved organizational citizenship behavior and increased students' achievement. In addition, employees with high organizational commitment give positive impacts to their performance, improve the service quality and reduce the negative behavior acting. Besides, committed individuals usually have greater level of satisfaction, responsibility and loyalty (Balci, 2003). In the context of education, teachers' commitment is highly important for the nexus between teachers and students. For example, Firestone and Pennell (1993) and Rosenholtz (1985) pointed out that organizational commitment is related to student achievement. Although the direct relation between organizational commitment and student outcomes is not always straightforward, it is an important indirect variable for student achievement. Marks and Louis (1997) stated that teacher commitment to the school affects pedagogical quality and student academic performance indirectly through school organization for instruction. Also, teachers' organizational commitment is an important indicator of a strong school culture (Cruise & Louis, 2009), which is considered an important mediating variable for student learning and high academic achievement (Hulpia et al., 2011). In recent years, the concept of empowerment and commitment has received attention from researchers as the potential determinants of employees' performance and high output in a variety of professions and different organizations (Ali Khamis Ali, 2002). However, the concepts of psychological empowerment have been given less attention in understanding employees' behavior at workplace, especially in the local context. Psychological empowerment is the psychological perception and attitudes of employees towards their organizations (Spreitzer, 1995). It is the intrinsic process of employees being empowered (Stander & Rothman, 2009; Menon, 2001). Spreitzer considered four elements of psychological empowerment; meaning, competence, autonomy and impact. Each element offers some descriptions of psychological state at which people are empowered. The concept of meaning refers to the individual's meaningfulness in completing the task goal or purpose. It is the employee's beliefs, values and behaviors. Competence implies the level of confidence about one's capabilities or skills to perform the task. On the other hand, self-determination reflects the autonomy and accountability of an individual's actions to do own work. While the dimension of impact refers to the extent to which an individual can influence outcomes at work environment. Nevertheless, Spreitzer (1996) recommended empowerment as a commitment-based design. The experience of psychological empowerment is visible in all those cognitions, if either one dimension of empowerment is omitted it will limit the experience of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer, 2007). With that in mind, psychological empowerment is attained by encouraging employees' beliefs about the meaning of their job, their capability to accomplish their task, their sense of self-determination, and their impact to influence the outcomes of their work (Boonyarit, Chomphupart & Arin, 2010).

Previous research demonstrated that empowered followers display better commitment to the organization (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Givens, 2011; Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999). Others advocated a

possible association between empowered employees and employees' commitment, which suggested that employees who are empowered tend to be more committed to the organization (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Givens, 2011; Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999; Sims & Kroeck, 1994). From literature cited by Choong et al., (2011), Nabila (2008) found that competence and meaning dimensions have a positive significant relationship with organizational commitment. Kraimer et al. (1999) also found that meaning dimension of psychological empowerment had mediated the relationship between the job characteristic and job satisfaction with the employees' commitment to the organization. Given this juncture, there is a critical need to understand the relationship between organizational commitment and psychological empowerment. Furthermore, relatively few studies have been conducted to examine the relationships of psychological empowerment and teacher's organizational commitment especially in the local setting. Therefore, this study aimed to fill gap in the research of organizational commitment and how it is influenced by psychology empowerment among primary school teachers.

2. Objectives of the study

- To examine the level of organizational commitment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang.
- To examine the level of psychological empowerment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang.
- To examine the relationship between perceived psychological empowerment and organizational commitment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang

3. Methodology

In this study, a research survey using quantitative method was applied. The instrument measuring multidimensional construct of organizational commitment was adapted from Meyer, Allen & Smith (1993) with modification to suit the purpose of the study. It consists of 16 items with a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The Psychological Empowerment Scale was developed by Gretchen Spreitzer (1995). The instrument had 12 items and was used to estimate the perceived level of psychological empowerment of the primary school teachers. There were four dimensions of psychological empowerment namely competence, self-determination, meaning and impact. Seven-point Likert-scale was used to engage the respondents' response. The scores ranged from very strongly disagree = 1 to very strongly agree = 7. There were 259 primary schools teachers participated in this study. Pearson's Product –Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment.

4. Findings and discussions

- To examine the level of organizational commitment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang

Table 1: The level of Organizational commitment

<i>Level of org commitment</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>percentage</i>
<i>Low (<2.99)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.4</i>
<i>Moderate (3.00-4.99)</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>86.9</i>
<i>High (5.00-7.00)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>12.7</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Mean- 4.57, std deviation- 0.74</i>		

As shown in Table 1, only 0.4% (1) of total respondents scored a low level of psychological empowerment. Majority of the teachers that is 86.9% (225) perceived themselves to have moderate level of organizational commitment. The rest (12.7%) with a frequency of 33 demonstrated high level of organizational commitment. This means that almost 100% of them reported moderate to high level of commitment to their schools. Further analysis was done to examine mean and standard deviation scores of each component of organizational commitment. Over two-thirds of the teachers perceived themselves as having moderate level of organizational commitment with mean

= 4.57 and SD = 0.74. The findings revealed that most of the teachers perceived themselves as moderately committed to their schools. This finding is in line with the study done by Norshidah (2008). The result suggests that the teachers were probably fairly concerned about their engagement to the school and moderately desired to continue working in the current place (Meyer & Allen, 1990).

- To examine the level of psychological empowerment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang

Table 2: the level of psychological empowerment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang

Level of psychological empowerment	Frequency	percentage
Low (<2.99)	3	1.2
Moderate (3.00-4.99)	176	67.9
High (5.00-7.00)	80	30.9
Total	259	100
Mean- 5.04, std deviation-0.82		

Table 2 shows that 67.9% (176) of the teachers were in the moderate level of psychological empowerment. Almost one-third, that is 80 (30.9%) of the teachers viewed themselves to be highly empowered psychologically. While only 3 (1.2%) scored low level of empowerment with a mean value less than 2.99. The total mean score for psychological empowerment was 5.04, std dev- 0.82 which illustrates a high mean score. Therefore, it can be concluded that the primary school teachers in the district of Klang perceived themselves to have a high level of psychological empowerment. Therefore, the result suggests that teachers, who are empowered, believed they are self-directed, self-efficient and more creative in accomplishing their task (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). As a result, the teachers are likely to achieve success and innovativeness in their job (Spreitzer, 1995).

- To examine the relationship the between perceived psychological empowerment and organizational commitment among the primary school teachers in the district of Klang

Table 3: The relationship the between perceived psychological empowerment and organizational commitment

	OC	meaning	competete	Self Determine	impact	PEOverall
OC	1					
meaning	.488	1				
competete	.377	.830	1			
Self- determine	.426	.567	.618	1		
impact	.289	.367	.357	.570	1	
PE overall	.481	.831	.844	.845	.735	1

The results show that there are positive significant relationships between organizational commitment and all the psychological empowerment dimensions, namely meaning ($r=.488$, $p=0.000$), competence ($r=.377$, $p=0.000$), self-determination ($r=.426$, $p=0.000$) and impact ($r=.289$, $p=0.000$). The correlation between overall psychological empowerment and organizational commitment is $r=.481$, $p=0.000$; which signifies a significantly positive and moderate relationship. From the results, meaning dimension indicates the highest correlation factor compared to others, followed by self-determination, competence and lastly impact dimension. The correlation between organizational commitment and overall psychological empowerment shows a significantly positive and moderate relationship. This finding suggests that the intrinsic task motivation of the teachers' is associated with their sense of attachment to the schools. This study is supported by previous studies by Najafi et al., (2011), Jha (2011), Choong et al., (2011a) and Kraimer et al. (1999).

5. Conclusions

The focus of the study is to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment and psychological empowerment as perceived by the primary school teachers in the district of Klang. From the findings, a few conclusions were drawn as follows: 1) the levels of organizational commitment are moderate. 2) The level of overall psychological empowerment as perceived by the primary school teachers was high. 3) The relationship between organizational commitment and overall psychological empowerment of the teachers was found to be positive and moderate. Furthermore, the correlations between organizational commitment and two of the psychological

dimensions (meaning and self-determination) also showed a significantly positive and modest relationship. On the other hand, the relationship between competence and impact dimensions with organizational commitment were positively significant but low correlated. From the results, it was observed that the overall teachers' organizational commitment and its components were only at the average level. Therefore, necessary action is required to improve the commitment levels. To add to this point, the concerns that there were only a few of the teachers feel highly committed to their school, thus the need to consider upgrading their level of commitment to schools. It has to be noted that, by developing more sense of psychological empowerment, directly or indirectly, there will be more positive effect on the level of organizational commitment. Thus, to encourage better feelings of psychological empowerment, higher management should obviously express a vision that motivates teachers to seize greater responsibilities for their job. This can be done by understanding employee needs, engaging confidence-development trainings and producing a supportive environment. In this sense, school principals have to be the main mediator to practice empowerment at the school level, because the general concept of empowerment is set off from leaders or managers of an organization. Since meaning dimension was a positive and significant contributor to organizational commitment, principal has to empower teacher by clearly defining the school goals, vision and values and provide a suitable fit between school's requirements and teachers personal value system and encourage their positive view points towards work and job activities. By this way, teachers may develop a higher level of psychological attachment to the school and hence increase their commitment level.

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